

MEETING SUMMARY
Regional Concerns Meeting
Colchester IM 089-3(69)
Interstate 89 – Bridges #76 North & South over Bay Road
Interstate 89 – Bridges #77 North & South over Malletts Creek
May 28, 2015
Colchester Meeting House
830 Main Street, Colchester
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

A Regional Concerns Meeting to discuss a transportation improvement project for two I-89 bridges located in Colchester was held by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) on Thursday, May 28, 2015. In attendance representing VTrans were: Jennifer Fitch, VTrans Scoping Project Manager, Laura Stone, VTrans Scoping Engineer, Kristin Higgins, VTrans Design Project Manager, Scott Burbank, VHB Consultant Designer and Jill Barrett, VTrans Project Outreach Coordinator.

Jennifer Fitch said the purpose of meeting was to provide an understanding of VTrans approach to the project and an overview of project constraints, discuss alternatives and maintenance of traffic considered, provide an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns, and foster support for the recommended alternative.

The highway bridges are located between Exits 16 and Exits 17. The substructure and superstructure for all four bridges are in satisfactory condition but the bridge decks are rated either fair or poor. The project will replace the decks on all the bridges, widen each bridge by one foot, upgrade the bridge and approach railings and install a guardrail to provide protection to the bridge piers along Bay Road.

The work will be done using Accelerated Bridge Construction methods. The decks will be replaced in sections with precast concrete panels. The panels will be installed during the evening, over the course of 12 nights for each highway barrel (direction) for a total of 24 nights. Two bridges in the same barrel, north or south, will be replaced at the same time. When the bridges on one side of the highway are replaced, I-89 will be shut down and traffic will be detoured on US 2/US 7.

The project was detailed in a PowerPoint presentation. Audience polling was interspersed with the presentation whereby attendees described their personal use of the project area. Attendees were asked what month they preferred for construction. The response was unanimous – April.

Throughout the meeting the public had an opportunity to ask questions and share their views. Below in italics are questions and comments by attendees. Unless otherwise noted, all the responses were made by Jennifer Fitch or Kristin Higgins of VTrans.

Planning and Design

Has there been a pedestrian count done for Bay Road? I've observed that there are quite a lot of users of the bike path on Bay Road.

Jason Charest, transportation planner for the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, responded that his agency is planning to do a bicycle and pedestrian count, using an infra-red counter.

When you rate bridges, at what point do you consider the bridge critical?

Once we get to a rating of three we start thinking of closing the bridge. We close it when rated at two.

All the highway bridges were built at the same time. Why is one in worse condition than another?

We observed more concrete spalling on one bridge. There could be many factors of why that happens.

Where will you place the new guard rail on Bay Road? The bike path is very close to the bridge abutment.

The location of the guardrail has not been determined yet. This is a design detail that we will look at later on.

Shouldn't we try to get the bridge decks wide enough to meet standards?

We cannot achieve standards without building new bridges.

I like that you are developing a contingency plan for this project, should unexpected impacts occur.

Do you have to coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers; the Clean Water program?

Yes, we will have to follow protocols and be responsible for any cleanup.

The design of bridge materials and quality of work is most important. We hope construction in this Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) project will be high quality.

We have found that precast deck materials are very durable and long lasting. The concrete is formed in ideal conditions that are sometimes superior to what is found when concrete is poured on site.

Construction and Timing

Where will you set up the crane needed to install the new sections of deck?

We have not worked this out yet. It will probably be located on Bay Road.

Will you be working on two bridges at the same time?

Yes. We will work on the two bridges in the same barrel, i.e. we'll replace the decks on the two northbound bridges as a pair, the two southbound bridges as a pair. This is the most efficient approach as we will only need to close one side of the highway at a time.

Did you consider having one-lane or one-way alternating traffic so that you would not need to close the highway?

We are unable to do a crossover because the bridges are too narrow.

How much control do you have over the timing of the project?

We have a lot of control because we are not affected by restrictions of working over water.

Will this project happen before the Exit 16 Diamond Interchange Project; the intersection project in the village at Routes 2A/2 and 7? We cannot have this project occurring at the same time as the others. The intersection project in the village is a higher priority.

We will coordinate scheduling of the I-89 Colchester Bridges Project so that it does not interfere with the other projects. The I-89 Colchester Bridges project would likely happen after 2018 if either of these other projects is able to come on line in 2018.

Project Impacts

Bay Road is an important emergency access route. How will construction affect our ability to use Bay Road?

We will close one travel lane for a few evenings when working on the deck above Bay Road. The length of the bridge span is 160 feet and only about 24 feet of that is over Bay Road.

There are many houses in the Bay Road area close to the bridges. It will be necessary to do outreach to these residents and the campground about the bridge project as they will be affected by construction noise and traffic impacts.

We plan to do extensive outreach as this project progresses.

There is a great fishing area in Malletts Creek around the bridge. I hope we will still be able to access this area during construction. I'd love to see a fishing pier there.

From the Town's perspective we would be most concerned about your traffic control and public outreach plans. Please be aware that we experience a lot of back up at the intersections at the I-89 interchanges. We are aware of the congestion at the interchanges and intend to coordinate with the local police and hire uniformed traffic officers to facilitate traffic movement.

This project will affect truckers as they heavily use this route at night when the construction will occur. There is no alternative road that they can use.

Is it possible to notify GPS about the project so that people can be informed?

We will look into this.

What will be the impact on motorists on I-89 during the day?

Motorists will drive over plates that will cover the deck while it is being replaced during the evening. We expect the highway will be posted for slower speed, perhaps 55 mph.

Other

I recognize the value of the ABC program but wonder if it is in sync with the long term sustainability of our transportation infrastructure. Will a two-lane bridge be adequate or should we be building a new, three-lane bridge to accommodate future traffic?

Interstate bridges are very costly so we like to get the most out of our assets. The beams and abutments have a rating of six which means they have another 40 years of life before they will need to be replaced. The growth rate is not expected to rise to a point where we'll need a three-lane bridge in the near future. We use models to project growth so the level of growth predicted is not certain but it is the best tool that we have.

If we don't have more growth than is predicted, then I think the region and state will be in trouble.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.